

K. S.
1418 L. H.
17

CHEAP REPOSITORY.
THE
H U B B U B;
OR, THE
HISTORY of Farmer RUSSEL the hard-hearted
OVERSEER.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,
[PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Religious and
Moral Tracts] No. 17, Queen-Street, Cheapside, and No. 4,
Aldermay Church-Yard; and R. WHITE, Piccadilly,
LONDON.
By S. HAZARD, at Bath; J. Elder, at Edinburgh, and by
all Bookfellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers, in Town and
Country.

Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Or 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

A Cheaper Edition for Hawkers.

[Entered at Stationers Hall.]



(3)

THE HUBBUB, &c.

THE oldest man living at Compton-Ashby, cannot call to mind such another Hubbub as that which happened there some months ago; on the common, just before the poor-house door. A number of men, women, and children, had formed a ring round one farmer Ruffel, a sullen, down-looking fellow, whom no one loved, and every one feared; for his love of money had led him to be hard hearted, and his power over the poor had made him insolent. Never was there such a hissing and hooting, and hallooing heard. Many of these people had been grievously oppressed by the farmer, and now they had him in their power, they seemed resolved to shew him little mercy.

Betty Jobbins beat the frying-pan with the key of the door, Sally Gore pounded the pestle and mortar, Nelly Shepston rung the warming pan, Dick Devonshire blew the Ram's horn, whilst Nick Stafford and others gangled the sheep's bells.

It so happened that one Mr. Britton rode up at the instant to enquire what was the matter, of two poor women who were sitting in the porch of the poor-house. One of them, Amy Talbot, seemed to be about fifty years of age, but time had not cured

Amy of gossiping, or taught her to mend her cloaths. As she had no turn for industry in her youth, she soon eat, and drank up the little property left her by her parents, which might now have afforded her a comfortable maintenance; but no, Amy's tongue was always abusive and always busy, whilst her fingers were seldom employed. Wherever there was a gossiping in the parish, thither ran Amy with her rags flying about her, like a scare-crow in a cherry tree. Her skin, which was quite tawny, was never washed; her hair had worked itself through the holes of her mob, half the border of which was lost, and the flaps of it were always flying behind her; the pigs had one day eaten a hole through her hat as it lay on the ground, and a piece of it now hung over her eye like a black patch, her petticoats were all tatters, and her gown reached but little below her knees; it had been torn away bit by bit, till it was ravelled out to the above dimensions; her stockings had no feet, and her feet were slipped into a miserable pair of shoes, which she had not taken the trouble to draw up at heel, even when they were new; in one hand she clenched her rags together, whilst with the other, she held a short pipe in her mouth resting her elbow on her knee, as she sat cross legged.

The other poor woman whose name was Apsey, was of a very different cast from Amy; she was the picture of cleanliness, and good housewifery; she was mending her apron, which though very coarse, was as white as the driven snow; this good woman never sat at the door to take the air, but she was doing something; "it is a duty," she would say, "to turn our time to the best account we can," and when her other employment was over she

would read a chapter in her Bible. Mr. Britton asked her what occasioned the uproar, and at the same time slipped half a crown into her hand, giving afterwards a few halfpence to Amy, which he thought was more than such a dirty woman deserved.

"Why, Sir," cried Amy pocketing her pence, "I'll tell you all how and about it; don't you see that fatty ill-looking fellow of a farmer so hooted at by the people? he is a fine rare crusty old blade, and has hectored over the parish at a fine rate; he is always at law with the Parson about tithes, and with his neighbours upon the slightest provocation; besides, Sir, he is Overseer of the poor, and a poor time we have had on't, but thanks be praised, 'tis come home to the wretch at last," then she fell to hooting and hissing, till she foamed at the mouth again; which having wiped off with the corner of her gown, she said, "now, Sir, I'll tell you: that fellow's stomach has been well filled with every thing of the best, whilst he has starved poor we almost to death, but 'tis likely to come home to him at last, and he may chance to swing for it, and then we shall all be revenged of him," and again she fell to clapping her hands.

"Prithce Amy," replied dame Apsley very calmly, "don't give way to such evil tempers; we have been hardly used by the farmer to be sure, but if we are christians, we must learn to forget and forgive." "If ever I forgive the villain," cried Amy, knocking the dust out of her pipe, "may I never get another quatern of tobacco; revenge is sweet, Sir, revenge is sweet."

"To an unchristian temper I grant it is," said
 "I grant it is," said Amy.

Mr. Britton, "but revenge is the worst passion that can enter the human breast, it is the very spirit of Satan."

"It is a very fine remark truly, Sir," said dame Apfley, "for to my thinking, a man who is always nursing up an evil passion in his bosom, is as if he cherished a serpent there; which must sting him to death at last; yet, Sir, I must be bold to say, much as I want money, I would not accept of farmer Russel's fortune, if I must take up the heavy burden of his crimes into the bargain." Ah! dame, dame," interrupted Amy, "preach as you please, I am glad at heart 'tis come home to the villain at last, things can't go on worse with us."

"Nor perhaps much better," answered dame Apfley, "for, after all, 'tis a very unthankful office to have much to do with poor people, especially if they have not the fear of God before their eyes; because then they are abusive, and ungrateful to those who are guardians over them; for the matter of that, Amy, have we not several old people in this poor house, who have been drunken, idle, blaspheming people all their lives; and though we live so near to the church, not one of them has seen the inside of it for many years past, unless when there has been Christmas gifts' money to be given away; but I think if I were the parson, Amy, every Lord's day I would drive the whole posse into church before me, if they were able to set one foot before another." "My good woman," said Mr. Britton, "I am mightily pleased to see how usefully you employ your time, for you have continued your work ever since we have been chatting together." "Time, Sir, is the gift of God, and I must account to him for it; besides, Sir, often when I am busily

employed at my needle, I can ponder on some text of Scripture; and I can say with King David, *As for me, when I am poor and in heaviness, thy help, O God, shall lift me up.* Now, Sir, although I am very poor, that is no reason why I should not be very clean; if my cloathing be coarse, that is no excuse for its being ragged, and if I am lame in my feet, that is no cause for my fingers being idle; besides, Sir, a stitch in time saves nine, and I frequently get a shilling by mending stays, or quilting of servants' petticoats, when my health will permit."

"Ah! well," interrupted Amy, "I never had the heart to work, unless I were better paid for it. But I say dame; I will say, that I am glad at heart farmer Ruffel is in hold at last; *live, and let live*, is my notion of the thing; but no, he went on from day to day, cribbing and scraping something out of every body; and no sooner did he get a little up-pish in the world, than he took no more account of poor we, than if we had been so many hedge-hogs, for all he was born and bred amongst us; but for the matter of that, he ha'nt been much kinder to his own family, for you must know, Sir, his bitter temper caused his only son to run away from him, nor has any tale or tidings ever been heard of him." Here again Amy began hissing and hooting the farmer, in so much, that Mr. Britton began to think he should never get at the end of the story.

"Now, Sir," cried Amy at last, whilst she filled her pipe, "now I have got breath again, I'll tell you all how and about it. You must know, last hard winter, Sir, when bread was so dear, and eggs were so scarce, farmer Ruffel would not let the parish be at the expence of mending the church on our house, so that when the snow melted, it ran in

streams down on dame's bed, by which she lost the use of her limbs, and she has hobbled with crutches ever since: yet she, foolish woman, seldom complains; but off she goes to her Bible for comfort, as another body would to a glass of gin, or a pot of beer, when things go amiss."

"The troubles of life," said Dame Apley, "are but as shadows which pass away; but the christian's rest will be eternal; and certain I am, Sir, my weak nature would often have given way to sinful murmurings, but for the gracious promise of better things in the life to come." "O! Sir," continued she, "I have found it much more for my soul's good to bless Heaven for what I have, than to murmur for what I have not; though, to be sure, I have seen better days," wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Indeed has she, Sir," cried Amy, "for dame's husband was a man well to pass in the world; he rented a small farm, and was accounted one of the most industrious men in the country; and as to dame herself, up early and down late was her maxim: when all of a sudden comes that same knavish scoundrel there, farmer Russel, and takes farmer Apley's estate over his head, who was soon after obliged to take up with day-labouring to maintain his family: by and by sickness came on, and followed next; farmer Russel seized farmer Apley's goods for a little debt, and at the end of a long fit of sickness, he and his whole family were brought here to the poor house, where the man soon after died of a broken heart; and yet, Sir, dame is for forgiving the farmer all this." "That I do," replied she, "since my blessed Saviour not only forgave his enemies, but prayed to

his Heavenly Father to forgive them also, and I should read my Bible to little profit, Amy, if I learnt nothing from so bright an example; but, good Sir," said she, turning to Mr. Britton, "your patience must be quite tired, not to be yet made acquainted with all the Hubbub yonder; but most folks are so fond of telling their own stories, that they do not think of other people. There is, Sir, a poor soldier found dead this morning on the next parish; and it is thought that farmer Russel has had some concern in the matter, so the people are now going to carry him before a justice to be examined."

"And I hope he will be hanged, I hope he will be hanged," cried Amy, clapping her hands,—"and I hope he will live to repent," cried dame Apfley, wiping her eyes. Mr. Britton's curiosity was now raised, and he attended the mob to the justice's.

Justice Carter was an upright gentleman, just such a man as a justice of the peace ought to be. Before he administered an oath to an ignorant person; "Think a moment, my friend," he would say, "before you kiss this book, whether you can stand to the truth of what you are going to swear, when you are called to be judged for it, before the God of Heaven and earth." No temptation could ever prevail on his worship unjustly to favour any man: the laws, he said, must take their course; if they were found severe, he did not make them: it was his duty to administer them.

"And, please your worship," cried one Jones, who seemed to be the ring-leader of the mob, "we all hope, that you will now take revenge for us on

the farmer; for all the spiteful tricks he has played us."

"I should make but an ill use of power," Jones replied the justice, "if I were to do any thing from heat or passion; if the law acquits farmer Ruffel, I shall readily dismiss him."

"Well, to be sure," cried the people all in a breath, "your Worship must be a very fine Christian to forget and forgive at this rate, for to our certain knowledge the farmer has been a plague to you yourself these ten years, sneering at you many times, and saying, 'that neither you nor the law could take hold of him.' "Now, do not you see," replied the justice, "that all that has nothing to do with the present matter?"

Then turning over a great book as big as a church bible, the witness was called, who deposed upon oath, that the last evening just between light and dark, he saw farmer Ruffel dragging a poor soldier-like looking man over Compton bridge, clear out of his own parish into the next, that he there laid him down by the side of the ditch; that at first he, the witness, believed the man to be dead; but that in a short time he found the poor fellow had only fainted through weakness; that the witness had lent the poor soldier all the assistance in his power; but that he was obliged soon after to follow his cattle.

Here the witness's evidence closed. "And could you," said the justice to farmer Ruffel, "drag a poor traveller out of your parish in this barbarous manner? In order to save your own parish a trifling expence, you did not scruple to risk the life of this poor traveller. You thought indeed, that the darkness concealed you; but remember, though

in seemed dark, yet the broad eye of the Almighty was upon you. "I had never said it before now."

The farmer then in a saty tone replied, that the man had no business in his parish, and that as for himself, no one could say he was unkind to the poor, for he paid three times as much to the poor-rates as any man in the parish, (the lord of the manor only excepted). "And reason good," cried ragged Amy, "who had followed the mob, "because you are the greatest renter in it; for by dishonest practices you have got all the small farms into your own hands; but farmer; no one has heard you ever gave a penny out of your own pocket to the poor when the laws did not compel you, so no thanks for your charity. And please your Worship, every one here knows, that whenever a kind gentleman and lady sent a few shillings to be divided amongst us, if the farmer heard of it he would stop our pay till it was gone."

Both the Justice and Mr. Britton quite shuddered at this act of cruelty, and every one present hoped his Worship would not fail to take ample revenge on the farmer.

"My friends," said the Justice again, "if my breast harboured revenge against any man, I should be unfit for a magistrate; did you never see the picture of Justice painted in my great hall? He is there represented as holding a pair of scales with the balance quite even."

The Justice wishing to know some more circumstances about the man's death, the whole party now moved off to the place where the corpse lay, attended by Mr. Britton; by the way they accused the farmer of every crime; some of which he had not, and others which he had committed. "Ah!"

said one, "who sold cider for the vintners, when it was proved it had been half filled up with water?" "Who," said another, "sold his hay ricks, all warranted good, and when they were laid open they were found crammed with mussy stuff, fit only for littering cattle?" "And who," cried a third, "carried the best samples of wheat to the market, and afterwards fobbed the buyer off with the very worst?" "And who," bawled out a fourth, "turned his own child out of doors, and mayhap murdered him, for no tidings have been heard of him since?"

Much after this manner they went on, and soon after the coroner pronounced a verdict of *natural death*, no marks of violence being found upon the body. The farmer now brightened up at once, and, flicking his hands in his waistcoat pockets, cast a malignant grin of triumph on all around him; "Now touch me if you dare," cried he, "but if my name be Russell, I'll have my revenge of every man and woman's child of you; and I'll spend a thousand pounds at law, but I'll be a match for some of you. I'll lay an action against you, John Holkins, for defamation; you have accused me with the murder of my own child; now prove your words, if you can." Poor Holkins turned as pale as death, well knowing the farmer's unforgiving temper.

Here some one searching the pockets of the deceased, was surprised to find in them a letter not sealed, directed to farmer Russell, of Compton Ashby. The letter was offered to the farmer, but he refused to take it, having always thought it unlucky to touch any thing belonging to the dead.

The people then requested Mr. Britton to read it aloud, which he at length consented to do.

THE LETTER.

"Honoured Father,

"THIS comes to you, from your ever dutiful, but unfortunate son, JAMES RUSSEL."

Here the shouts of the people were so clamorous, that Mr. Britton could not go on reading; every one pressed round the body, and after examining the face for a moment, they one and all cried out in a breath, "'Tis Jemmy Russel, 'tis Jemmy Russel, as sure as eggs are eggs; we can't be mistaken by the cut across his right eye." "O, you hard hearted wretch!" said Hopkins, shaking his clenched fist at the farmer, (who gave a deep groan, and turned as white as a sheet,) "will you have the law of me now, because I said you killed your son, you cruel monster!" Mr. Britton here interferred, and said, let me advise you good folks to hear the letter read through and stop your tongues a moment.

"My dear father, I have faithfully served his Majesty King George in his wars for many years; but falling at length into the same disorder of which my poor mother died the consumption; my commanding officer who has behaved like a father to me, has kindly granted me a furlow, to try what my native air will do for me, giving me at the same time a golden guinea out of his own pocket to bear my expences on the road, he having always taken

(4)
a great fancy to me, feeling as how, I ever made it
my delight to obey him. So I began my march
homeward, although with great fear and trembling,
pondering in my mind the last words I ever heard
you speak; which were, 'That you wished I might
drop down dead if I ever dared to darken your doors
again;' and calling down heavy curses on yourself
if ever you forgave me; and now, as my offence,
dear father, was but a slight one, and much have I
repented of it, and much shall we all have to be
forgiven when we shall appear before God in judg-
ment, so I humbly trust you will receive me kindly
when you see how sick, and how very weak I am.
I have fallen down once or twice on the road, and
having spent all my money, have been for two days
lying by charity. I therefore write these few lines
from the Swan at Bridgewater, where I have stopped,
in order that they may, in case I should not be able
to reach home alive, be sent to you after my death.
Oh, my dear father! my hour glass is almost run,
and death will now be welcome to me, for my life
has been little else than pain and sorrow. Oh fa-
ther, nothing becomes a christian man like sorrow
for sin, even when he is sound in health, and his
worldly concerns flourishing round him. Pray,
dear father, think of these things. Although this
life is nearly over with me, yet I have a comfortable
hope and trust that the joys of the next will soon open
upon me.

"Farewell, for ever, my dear and honoured fa-
ther: should we meet no more in this world, I
humbly pray we may meet in the next. I beg par-
don for all my faults, and with my dying breath
subscribe myself, your ever dutiful son,

JAMES RUSSEL."

Many tears were shed whilst Mr. Britton read the letter. "My good friends," said he, when he had finished it, "let me now give you a word of advice: Whenever a sick and poor traveller, (and especially when a brave British soldier or sailor, who has shed his blood in fighting for you in foreign parts, and is perhaps escaped from an enemy's prison,) knocks at your door to ask for charity, do not refuse him a cup of beer, or a plentiful slice of bread and cheese; to you who abound it is little, to him it may be much; and henceforward let us all learn to look upon every man in distress as a child or a brother; and let us do by him as we would wish to be done by, if we were in his condition. As for you, farmer Ruffel," continued he, "no reproof from me is wanting, for the event that has happened is of itself the most bitter of all reproofs."

"O my son! my son!" at length cried the farmer, (wringing his hands, and tearing his hair with grief,) "my own curses have brought on my own destruction! Wretch! wretch that I am!" (here attempting to rise, he sunk down by the body of his son, and then fell in to such strong convulsion fits, that six of the stoutest men present could not hold him: his limbs were distorted, his face turned black, his eyes looked as if they were bursting out of his head; so dreadful indeed was his situation, that those who but a moment before hated and reviled him, were now ready to pity him. "What an affecting sight," said Mr. Britton "have we now before us! God grant that it may prove a lesson to us all. It was but a few moments ago that this miserable man, who now lies struggling in the toils of death before you, was proudly rejoicing that he had escaped the lash of the law."

The farmer's waggon now arrived to carry him home, and it was a most moving sight, to see it followed by the corpse of his son. A doctor was sent for, who the moment he saw the farmer, said he feared he could do nothing for him. Mr. Britton watched by him all night, and when the fits went off for a few minutes, he was heard thus to mutter to himself.

"Of what use to me is all the riches in the world, now, the afflicting hand of Heaven is upon me? My punishment is great, great also has been my crime.—I suffered my own child to perish for want, whilst I was in plenty, and now my own hand has helped to kill him; how hard also have I been to the poor; the Lord has smitten me for it! The curses I have often uttered against them are now come upon myself. I must die! The jaws of Hell seem opening to devour me!"

After this the farmer uttered nothing to be understood, though he languished near three weeks in a state of misery which excited the pity of all who saw him.

His body of his son and the body of his son were both strong convulsion fits that of the latter were such violent could not hold him; his limbs were distorted, his face turned black, his eyes looked as if they were bursting out of his head; so dreadful indeed was his situation, that those who but a moment before had been his friends, were now ready to pity him.

THE END.

"What an affecting sight," said Mr. Britton "have we now before us!—God grant that it may prove a lesson to us all. It was but a few months ago that this miserable man, who now lies struggling in the coils of death before you, was proudly rejoicing that he had escaped the jaws of the law."

